

Boat Pastime



Sri Sri Vraja-vilasa Stava
of Raghunatha Das Gosvami, Verse 64:

*gAndharvikA mura-vimardana nau vihAra
lIla vinoda rasa-nirbhara bhoginIyam
govardhanajjala zila-kulam unnayanti
vIla-bharair avatu manasa jahnava mAm*

“May Manasi Ganga, who enjoys the great sweetness of Sri-Sri Radha Krishna’s boating pastimes and whose waves are pushing up the Govardhana Hill’s brilliant boulders, protect me.”

Stavamrta Kana Vyakhya of Ananta Das Pandit

In this verse Sripada Raghunatha praises Manasa Ganga, one of Govardhana Hill’s holy waters. yatra vai manasi ganga maha-papaugha-nasini (Garga Samhita) “On Govardhana Hill is Manasi Ganga, which destroys all great sins.” This Manasa Gaiiga is Sri Sri Giriraja’s eye. netre vai manasi gangah (ibid.) Manasa Ganga is the abode where Krishna plays water sports with His boyfriends and where Sri Sri Radha-Madhava play different water sports with Their girlfriends. Sripada Raghunatha is Sri Radha’s maidservant, hence he mentions the most rasika boating-pastimes of Radha-Madhava when he praises Manasa Ganga.

In this verse Manasa Ganga is praised in connection with the revelation of a sweet pastime. Sri Raghunatha was absorbed in bhajan on the bank of Sri Radhakunda when he suddenly got a divine vision in which he saw Sri Radharani, Lalita, Visakha and other sakhis taking jugs with ghee and yoghurt to Govinda Kunda, a lake at the base of Govardhana Hill. Under the guidance of Purnamasi they set out from Radhakunda to Govardhana on the pretext of donating ghee to a sacrifice there, but with the actual desire to meet Syama somewhere there. In his kinkari-

rupa Sri Raghunatha follows his/her Isvari. The woods are illuminated by the golden bodily splendor of Srimati and Her girlfriends. With restless eyes Isvari looks all around – “Where is the Lord of My life?!” Waves of mahabhava desires to see Her loving Sri Krishna rise on the ocean of Her heart. When Syama gets a message that Srimati Radharani and Her girlfriends are approaching Govardhana Hill with ghee and yoghurt, Syama dresses Himself like an amazing boatman and sits in a boat on the Manasa Jahnavi. Manasa Ganga’s bosom is illuminated by the bluish luster of this boatman, who enchants the three worlds. Seeing this young boatman, Srimati and Her girlfriends put down their pots of yoghurt and stand on the shore. Then Srimati Radharani tells Bodai (Her governess Purnamasi):

*bodai! ai ki ghatara neye
kotha hoite asi, dilo darasana, vinoda tarani beye
rajata kancane, na-khani jadit, bajiche kinkini jala
aparupa ta’te, sobha ranga hate, mani-bandha keroyala
hasite hasite, gita alapiche, dhulaiche ranga ankhi
capaiya naya, ke jane ki caya, cancala nayana dekhi
ratanera phalli, sire jhalamali, kadamba kusuma kane
jathara ancale, vamsiti gunjeche, sobhe nana abharane
amara kohibo, kamsera yogani, buke na heliho kehu
jagannatha kohe, sasi sola kala, pele ki chadibe rahu?*

(Pada Kalpataru)

“O Holy mother! Who is that there near the Ghata? Where has He come from, showing Himself to us, steering His blissful boat, that is studded with gold and silver? His waist bells jingle and on His reddish hands are beautiful bangles! He smiles and laughs and sings a song while His reddish eyes are twirling. He wants Me to board the boat. Who knows what He wants when you look at His naughty, restless eyes? A jeweled strip shimmers on His head and He wears Kadamba-flowers on His ears. He keeps His flute tucked in the scarf around His waist and is beautified by different other ornaments. We will say: No one will neglect an assistant of Kamsa in the heart!” Jagannatha dasa says: “Will Rahu (the eclipse) give up the full moon when he caught it?”

The sakhis call out: “Boatman! Boatman!” Hearing their call, the enchanting boatman slowly brings His boat to the shore. With slow gait Srimati and Her friends board the boat, casting ecstatic glances here and there. Suddenly the boatman Krishna stops Srimati from boarding the boat and says:

*kohiche cikaya kala
vasa parihari, boisoho kisoni, para kori ei bela
nila vasana, katite paraho, dekhiye kampiche ga
navina nirada, bharama pavana, tvaraya dubabe la
kanura vacana, suniye tokhona, kapate kohice dhani
tomara angara, cikane varana, kemone lukabe tumi
suniya e kotha, kohoye lalita, keho na koriho gola
kaliya varava, chapabo ekhona, dhali diya ghana ghola*

*sunīya nagara, hoiya phamphara, madhura madhura hase
kohe guru dasa, hrdaye ullasa, sukhera sayare bhase*

Cikana Kala (glossy complexioned Krishna) said: “Give up Your dress (undress Yourself) and sit down, Kisorī (adolescent girl). Now I will help You to cross the river. If You wear this blue sari on Your waist, though, the wind will tremble all over his body and quickly sink our ship, thinking it to be a fresh monsoon cloud.” Hearing Kanu’s words, Dhani (fortunate Radhika) falsely said: “Your body has this glossy black-bluish complexion; how will You hide that one?” Hearing this, Lalita said: “Let nobody cause any confusion! I will cover His black complexion now by pouring thick yoghurt over Him!” Hearing this, Nagara (amorous hero Krishna) became puzzled and began to smile sweetly. Guru dasa says: “My heart floats in an ocean of bliss!”

Joking in this way Srimati and Her girlfriends eagerly boarded the boat, while waves of deep love played in Her heart. The young boatman brought the boat to the middle of the Jahnavī, whose bosom became illuminated by the sweet and wonderful forms of the Divine Pair. Jahnavī could not control her urges of ecstasy now that she got her most beloved pair on her bosom, and became agitated by high waves that smashed up against the large and brilliant boulders of Govardhana Hill. The billowing waves of ecstatic Jahnavī gushed inside the boat, making Srimati afraid. The sakhis said: “Ohe incompetent steersman! Are You going to kill us and ruin our wealth by making us drown in the middle of the Ganga today, or what?” The steersman didn’t notice anything; He was simply absorbed in relishing the sweet feelings of restless-eyed Srimati. As the boat sank Srimati became terrified and with eyes startled with fear She tightly clasped Syama around the neck. In this way the sakhis and manjaris relished the wonderful sweetness of the union of the Divine Pair. Jahnavī’s desires were fulfilled. Slowly her waves became more peaceful and the boat sided to the shore. After feeding Syamasundara the yoghurt and the butter everyone went back to their own places.

Holding the memory of this vision in his heart, Sripada Raghunatha says: “May Manasa Ganga, who enjoys the great sweetness of Sri-Sri Radha-Krishna’s boating pastimes and whose waves are pushing up Govardhana Hill’s brilliant boulders, protect me.” Srīla Rupa Gosvāmicārana also praised Sri Govardhana as such:

*kamsarates tari vilasitairatarananga rangair
abhrinam pranayam abhitaih patram unmilayantyah
dhauta gravavalir amalinair manasamartya sindhor
vici-vrataih prathayatu sada sarma govardhano nah*

(Stavamala)

“The waves of the Manasa Ganga-lake, where Sri Krishna becomes a boatman and accepts fees for His boat services from the gopis, and which increases the love of the gopis which subdues Sri Krishna, wash the rocks of Govardhana Hill. May that Govardhana Hill bestow all auspiciousness on us.”

*radha-krsnera nau vihara, ujjvala rasera sara,
nitya bhoga koritechen yini
govardhana sila-kule, abhinava jhalamale,
tarangete urdhvete calani
sei to manasa ganga, bhagyavati antaranga,
raksa korun pratikula hoite
yugalera lila-rasa, hoibe ki saravasa,
e lalasa jage mora citte*

“May that fortunate Manasa Ganga, who always enjoys the boating pastimes of Radha and Krishna, which is the essence of the erotic mellow, whose waves push up the newly shimmering boulders of Govardhana Hill, and who is very close to the Divine Pair, protect me from all inauspiciousness. May the flavors of the pastimes of the Divine Pair become everything to me. This is the desire that awakens in my heart.”